

# White Paper Report

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Final Performance Report  
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Title: Learning as Playing: An animated, interactive archive of 17th-19th century narrative media for and by children

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## Narrative Description

### A. Project Activities

In this report I refer to my original project description submitted in October 2009 and funded in March 2010. I obtained extensions until December 2013, the last one due to my illness. Below I summarize my project description, the aims, and the content.

The aim of this project was to develop a web-based, animated and interactive virtual archive of early movable books. These would include both those produced for children and produced by children based on the theme of transformation. The initial phase of the project was to focus on flap books. The archive and supporting materials would be used for both scholarly and pedagogical purposes.

The scholarly aims were a to provide access to little known examples of early narrative media so they could be analyzed, to preserve the original artifacts by the creation of animated and interactive digital facsimiles, and to create a web-based community of researchers amongst isolated scholars. A broader aim was to educate teachers, students and the general public to consider these artifacts as examples of interactivity from earlier centuries. The content of the project would consist of a cross-section of texts, a descriptive bibliography, contextual information and links, and a scholarly blog.

I imagined a couple of digital innovations: one was a system of collaborative content development by like-minded scholars so they could contribute both primary materials and secondary information. The major innovation was to be a “discovery tool” that enabled a viewer to use “virtual touch” to simulate the experience of playing with the components of the artifacts.

Reading over what I proposed, I consider that I undertook all the activities that I was able to do myself. These involved research and documentation. The NEH grant enabled my research to progress for I visited several rare books collections in the United States (at Harvard, at Princeton, and at UCLA) and in England (at Oxford, at Cambridge and in London) looking for early examples of flap books both published and made in domestic settings. For these trips I was working from a rough list of items that I enhanced considerably by tracking down items that were ambiguously catalogued, seeing them and with permission photographing the items for research purposes. The results of these trips is a catalogue of all known flap books developed by a recent library school graduate, Mark Mattson, sponsored by using funds from the grant. The results are also seen in the online search engine of flap books on the website.

One flap book in particular, the earliest known turn-up book called “The Beginning, Progress and End of Man 1650” is extremely rare and fragile. Images are not readily available for scholars. I obtained digital images with the grant and two scans are housed on my site. With the grant I also obtained a number of images from Princeton University, the selection being made with the aid of the Cotsen curator Dr. Andrea Immel, and the Penn State rare books’ curator Sandy Stelts. The librarians and curators at the respective

libraries were all supportive of my research and I hope to continue these relationships in future work.

In terms of other activities I stipulated in the proposal, I have again achieved those that I could do myself: writing supporting documentation, providing a list of links, and writing a blog. In relation to the pedagogical aims, I have achieved my scholarly aims by giving several conference papers, publishing several articles and book chapters and obtaining a book contract with Routledge. I also have been able to achieve my aims with outreach to contemporary children by visiting an afterschool program and having them make their own versions of simple turn up books, using a piece of paper cut and folded in the same way as those made by children hundreds of years ago. I have also spoken to general adult audiences about my research project, and make used the project in my graduate and undergraduate teaching.

Of my aims, the one area that is problematic is the website, particularly the animated, digital facsimiles. This proved to be more complex than I had imagined, as I outline below according to the criteria for the report. Headed by Linda Friend, head of Scholarly Communications, the library partners are providing a report about the digital aspects of the project, which will be included as a separate document.

#### Part B. Accomplishments

This section will be based on qualitative responses comparing the proposed objectives with the emerging project. I focus on the website, still in process, which is the digital product (also item g).

In my proposal and talk in Washington after receiving the grant I envisioned the digital archive as the core of a circular model with outer rings being collaborative spaces directed to scholars and to a wider community. (My mental images were inspired by early astronomy texts with movable dials called volvelles, with a structure like the planet like Jupiter itself in motion and with moving, encircling rings. I had no clear idea how this idea could be implemented.)

In reality the visual order is different and based on a linear format:

<http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/flapbooks.html>

The site opens to reveal a front page with the stylized template of the PSU Libraries of blue on white as a framing device, with the title of the project “Learning as Playing” in the upper band. Inside the frame is the front page itself with two lovely images essential to the imagery of early religious turn up books that form the core of the project: a tree with gold and red apples and entwined gold –green snake on the one side, and a rampant lion with his on the other. The two beasts have their teeth bared and face one another. These beautifully colored images are not from the turn up books I have been studying but since they are conventional images appear in many print works as well as on other media such as fabric or plaster. The first is a portion of a contemporaneous German Adam and Eve print.

These images in turn frame a short menu: some text is larger and can be clicked and others are smaller, paler and not active. The four darker blue and larger terms are Background, Bibliography, “Play”, Blog, and Image Gallery. The smaller font and paler words are process, and links.

Going methodologically through the site, when I click on the first of the four links called Background I am taken to a short essay I wrote about movable books in a questions and answer style. It includes some links to relevant digital projects to provide context and a brief “defense” of the academic value of the learning as playing project. One reviewer provided excellent critique of the section, and I forwarded my changes to the library web-developer on February 27, 14 so they can be uploaded.

When I click on the second, called Bibliography (which is actually a search engine) I am taken to an apparently blank form with key bibliographic terms: keyword, title, author, illustrator, place, publisher but including other aspects like genre and whether it is colored or not. What is intriguing about this apparently minimal information is that when you enter a term in the right category, you get a result that searches the list for you. For example, at the top If I chose a keyword search say, “Adam” I receive 14 entries in chronological order. Again although it is not evident, this list includes manuscript texts as well as published ones, for in the former no publisher is specified. In this way the bibliography is intended to be an interactive site for scholars searching for information about early turn-up or flap books in English and German published in England and the United States. As a couple of reviewers noted, this link needs to be labeled, such as a “catalogue of flap books” so the user knows the affordances of the device.

Clicking “Play” –this is a well named link- takes you to an interactive space where there are two mobile facsimiles of early 19th century religious turn up books housed at Penn State, called *Metamorphosis*, one in English (1814) and one in German (1833). The books were published in America from the late 18th until late 19th centuries. When you first open the page the German edition floats in circles in the background but when you click on the two options two routes appear. You can play with the book as a strip and turn the individual leaves up and down. The virtual books have springability and can close on their own. (Their innate movement reminds me of a slinky toy a bit.)

The different types of moving digital artifacts are both interactive and mobile. But they are actually somewhat too mobile for the viewer has more of a game-like interaction than a scholarly one. The images need to be stabilized a bit so the viewer can analyze them carefully as facsimiles. As noted by reviewers, this would enable them to function as research tools as well as demonstrating their playability.

As the name indicates, “Blog” is one I have been writing since August 2013 on a regular basis about the history of the project idea and my love for researching early movable books. It is called “Unfolding Metamorphosis” and features another image of the snake in the tree of knowledge seizing a yellow apple in this mouth. This is from another historical German print held in the Penn State Collection.

To date, the following link called “Image gallery” has two scans. They show the earliest known turn up book called *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650) with the flaps open and shut. It is uncut and pasted in a folio in the British Library, from whom I obtained the scans. It is important to include these images since these images are not available elsewhere. While the catalogue entry is listed in Early English Books online (EEBO), no images are included.

Since the *Metamorphosis* books are re-workings of this British text, even a small sample enables a viewer to compare different versions across time and countries. I have written a note to be put on the site and sent it to the library web developer (February 23, 14).

Other images slated to be added to this section will show a range of commercial and domestic production of this text and a range of different secular and moral texts religiously published in this format. In particular I obtained a large number of scans from Princeton University Library.

The inactive links are called “Process” and “Resources.” The content for “Process” is contained informally within the blog. “Resources” will include both a list of links to movable book resources and a description of an extension project I undertook with a colleague Dr. Kris Sunday and my graduate student Laura D’Aveta where children aged 6-11 in an afterschool program made their own simple turn up books. I submitted the list and our results to the library to upload on March 3 and 4, 2014.

The site is housed on the Penn State University Library server and they will continue to work on and host the site. The target deadline is the end of the school term in May. One issue is whether the Unity platform will be maintained due to visual accessibility needs. The library is providing a report about the digital aspects of the project, so this matter should be addressed.

#### Part C. Audiences.

Since the project is under construction and still “in house” I cannot provide quantitative data about user access to the site. Rather I will provide a reflective account of my intentions and the emerging product.

From the beginning I have intended the digital website to appeal to several groups of people ranging from scholars to primary school students. In my proposal abstract I rather blithely proposed “a collaborative scholarly and teaching resource at the university level for children’s culture, at the high school level for media literacy, and at the primary level for art education”. By the time I obtained the grant and gave my short talk in Washington I had tightened my ideas about audience to focus on two in particular –scholars and the wider community. In my talk about aims I proposed different types of interactive elements for these two broad categories. In the powerpoint in Washington I used several circles: a central core to be the digital archive, a ring to be a “collaborative workspace for and by the scholarly community,” and another ring to be a “collaborative playspace for a wider community.”

Comparing what I proposed to the existing digital project site I see some continuities and differences as I have tailored hopes to realities. Reflecting on my proposal I realize my ideas were based on an integrated model where interactive engagement was crucial to each level of the project. This was to be reflected in the playful design and interactivity of the site reinforcing the “Learning as Playing.”

As I discuss above under section B Accomplishments, the site has seven links that the user clicks on for them to open. Six are presently active: background, bibliography, play, blog, and image gallery. Two are not yet active: process and links.

Clicking on each I can identify which of two audiences is being addressed: scholarly and general. The short background information is aimed for a high school and university audience, anyone interested in early movable books. The bibliography is interactive in that it is search engine for the known turn up books I have identified both published and in manuscript (over 300 in all to date) and the audience is academic: curators and other scholars of early movable books. It could be used in a graduate school class as a demonstration. The play link opens to the two Penn State owned *Metamorphosis* books (English 1814 and German 1833) in motion. The engagement is interactive and the motions are graceful. The Unity engine shows the abilities of the books as playful artifacts quite well and could appeal to adults and youth. Since the blog is a personal account of my passion for researching early movable books, my adventures in rare books rooms, and an account of this project, the intended reader is any one interested in the topic. The image gallery containing the British Library scans of the earliest known turn up book is of most interest to scholars. The remaining two inactive links are intended to be supplements to a both audiences.

I have undertaken one small project with a primary school afterschool program to make simple turn up books out of one page of paper on a topical theme. The results will be either incorporated into resources or given a separate link. The project succeeded in showing links between the past and present, between flap books made by contemporary children and those of hundreds of years ago. There is a similar fascination in transformations and even recurrence in some themes. Since Penn State owns two early 19<sup>th</sup> century turn up books made in domestic environments, I should be added in due course.

#### Part D. Evaluation.

Since the site has no public presence I cannot comment on a wider response to its effectiveness. Since the audience is still “in house,” I evaluated the project informally and internally by approaching several groups of people indirectly connected with the project: the advisory board, a couple of scholarly participants and technical advisors.

I asked them to provide feedback about the usability of the website and its function as a research tool. I obtained oral feedback and responses by email. The first group consist of John Harwood, Senior Director Teaching and Learning with Technology and Associate Professor of English, The Pennsylvania State University Richard Virr, Head and Curator of Manuscripts, McGill University and Mathew Grenby, Professor of English Literature,

University of Newcastle. The second group comprises Professor Tina Thompson, Professor, Art Education, The Pennsylvania State University and Dr. Andrea Immel, Curator Cotsen Children's Library, Princeton University. I also approached Mr. Dave Stong, Information Technology Specialist, Educational Technology Services, The Pennsylvania State University, whose mock up of a turn up book using flash I included in the NEH proposal as the proof-of-concept project. His project is located at <http://blogs.tlt.psu.edu/projects/flapbook/blog/>. Since he is retired I consulted his successor Hannah Williams. I summarize the feedback below:

All mentioned that the idea of creating an interactive archive of early movable books focusing on flap books was both a bold and modest project. Bold because the level of animation and interactivity I was striving for is not common, and modest because I was working with only a few primary texts owned by Penn State University Libraries. They also liked the idea of a union catalogue of flap books, and including commercial and homemade objects both historical and present day. They made several positive remarks about the visual presentation and the blog.

In terms of content the main criticisms were in terms of editing, documenting and labeling the sections. After making the changes, I sent them to Linda Friend mid February to pass on to the web developer.

The main focus of the criticisms concern the working of the site itself: One aspect is the loading of the virtual books with Unity (long a problem with attempts having been made to correct this). This is problematic on some computers, and indeed Unity seems to load better on Macs than PCs. Another repeated concern is the inability to control the interactive books in order to study them. Another aspect is the lack of documentation about the bibliography.. It is not clear that it is really a search engine for the flapbooks that have been identified.

Regarding the site as a whole there are some problems with the navigation for one has to go back to the home page (using the back button) to access the different sections. This difficulty with navigation occurs within the blog as well.

#### E. Continuation of the Project

I have had informal talks with Sandy Stelts, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts at Penn State and she says her unit plans to support the project. In particular, since the library has bought several more moveable books and a couple of homemade turn up book manuscripts these will be digitized and added to the images section. This will be funded as an in house project.

Whether more animated books will be included on the site would depend on obtaining more funding and using a different platform since "Unity" will not likely continue to be supported. Since digital interactivity is a core idea, and the book making project a success, I am exploring ways to direct the project more towards pedagogical aims at the undergraduate, and graduate levels. I am having initial discussions with another IT unit at

Penn State to determine whether animations could be made on other platforms and also have parallel interactive access for the visually impaired.

In terms of new or strengthened collaborative partnerships, I plan to continue working with the Cotsen Children's Library. I also had the opportunity to other research libraries about their holdings in early movable books (the Bodleian at Oxford University, the British Library, and the Houghton Library at Harvard). They were very forthcoming about giving me access and permission to use their digital images. I hope to be able to strengthen these connections, ideally to a collaborative partnership status.

#### F. Long term Impact

It is too early to say much about long-term impact. I plan to use the site as part of my graduate course on early children's texts. Once the school activity of turn up book making has been included on the site, I will include it in my undergraduate teaching in children's literature where we have a section on movable books and on simple book making.

#### G. Grant Products

The most visible product is the website

Website <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/psul/digital/flapbooks.html>

Since early movable books published for and created by children are one of my main areas of research I have given a number of conference presentations and have written several articles and book chapters. A few relate specifically to the digital project in progress, and these are marked with an asterisk. Indeed I will be writing a follow-up article for *Book 2.0* about the digital project. It will concern a digital life or third life of *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650).

My academic outputs are as follows:

#### Book Chapters:

(under review) Modding as Making: Religious Flap Books Created by Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Anglo American girls, in *Girlhood studies and the Politics of Place: Contemporary paradigms for research* eds. Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler, New York: Berghahn.

(in press) 18th and 19th century movable books for girls as interactive conduct book texts. *Girls, Texts Cultures*. Eds. Clare Bradford and Mavis Reimer. Wilfred Laurier University Press.

"Artifactual Memory: fragmentary 'memoirs' of three 18th and 19th century moveable books about their child owners." In *Productive Remembering and Social Agency*. Eds. T. Stong-Wilson, Claudia Mitchell, Susann Allnutt and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan New York: Sense Publishers, 2013. Illus. p. 197-211.

“Les filles et la fabrication du sens : l'activité comme agency dans la culture domestique des débuts du XIXe siècle.” Translation of “Girls making meaning: activity as agency in early 19th century domestic culture.” In *L'Enfant et ses cultures: Approches internationales*. Eds. Sylvie Octobre and Régine Sirota. Paris: Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication, 2013. Illus. p. 179-204.

Refereed/Academic Articles:

\*(2012) {2013}; “Textual travels and transformations: Or, A tale of two lives of *The Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650).” *Book 2.0* 2: 1+2, pp. 91–111.

\*(2012). “Books or Toys? A Traveller’s Tale: Researching Early Movable Books for and by Children in Material and Virtual Collections.” *Papers: Explorations into Children’s Literature*, 22.1, 156-169.

(2012). ”Activity and Agency in historical ‘Playable media’: Early English movable books and their child interactors.” *Journal of Children and Media*, 6:2, 164-181.

Conference Papers: (refereed)

\*(under review) Turn-ups, Harlequinades and Metamorphoses 1688-1811: format and meaning-making in simple interactive texts. Submitted to “Forms and Formats: Experimenting with print 1695-1815” Bodleian Libraries, Oxford University September 8-9, 2014.

(accepted) Dissected maps and transparencies: Girls' commercial culture in the schoolroom at *Mansfield Park*. Submitted to “*Mansfield Park* in Montréal: Contexts, Conventions and Controversies.” Montreal October 10-12, 2014.

\*Textual travels and transformations: or, A tale of *the Beginning, Progress and End of Man* (1650). “The Future Perfect of the Book” book history colloquium at University College London. Nov. 25, 2011.

\*Jacqueline Reid-Walsh and Linda Friend. “Learning as Playing: emerging prototype of movable book.: THAT Humanities and Technology Camp, Chemical Heritage Foundation Conference Center, Philadelphia, Sept. 23-23, 2011.

Fuller Paper Doll Books: Interactive Design and Gender(ed) Play. Enduring Trifles: Writing the History of Childhood with Ephemera. Princeton University, February 17-19, 2011.

Jacqueline Reid-Walsh and Claudia Mitchell. From commonplace book to Facebook DIY citizenship; Critical Making and Social Media. University of Toronto, Ont. November 11-14, 2010.

\*Jacqueline Reid-Walsh and Linda Friend. Conceptualizing a Scholarly Blog for Early Moveable Books.” Poster Session. Symposium for Teaching and Learning with Technology, Penn State University State College. March 27, 2010.

The child interactor: the child reader-player of early participatory narratives. Imagining the Child symposium. Institute for the Public Life of Arts and Ideas, McGill University Montreal. March 10-11, 2010.

Invited Papers/ Symposia:

17th to 19th century girls domestic activities as DIY culture. Networks for change and well-being International gender and girlhood exchange. December 16, 2013. McGill University Faculty of Education. Room 200 Coach House, 3715 Peel Street

Learning as playing: movable books for children. Friends of the McGill Library McGill University, Colgate room. October 24, 2013 5.30 p.m.

“Modding’ as Making: ‘Placing’ Flap Books Made by Early American Girls Historically and Geographically.” Girlhood Studies and the Politics of Place: New Paradigms of Research. IGSF, McGill University, October 10-12, 2012.

Playful Media: 17th-19th century movable books and their child interactors. Workshop on D-Books (dynamic books). Annenberg Innovation Press D-Book imprint. Annenberg Innovation Lab, University of Southern California in Los Angeles, November 5, 2011.

Plenary Speaker. Girls Making Meaning: Activity as Agency in early 19th century Domestic Culture. *Enfance & Culture*. Colloque International. Ministre de la Culture et de la Communication, Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, December 15, 2010.

Do-it-Yourself Drama: Nineteenth –Century English Boys and Toy Theatre Play. Oxford Children’s Literature and Youth Culture Colloquium. Oxford University, English Faculty Building, November 22, 2010.

18th and 19th century movable books for girls as interactive conduct books. Girls, Texts, Cultures University of Winnipeg, CRYTC, Winnipeg October 15-17, 2010